SIGNET

THE DAWN OF
THE ROARING 20'S

2021

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LETTER FROM *THE EDITORS*

Dear members of Queens University of Charlotte,

Signet is a student-run organization led by students and Professor Renfroe. One edition is published every spring semester. I began my journey at Signet as a reader and Fiction editor the spring of 2019. I fell in love with reading the submissions and selecting the works that were to be added to the magazine. The following spring semester I had the privilege to take the lead role as Co-senior editor, a position I hold very dear to my heart. My experience with Signet has been nothing but positive and showed me how to be a leader.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the current editorial staff members and designing and marketing team for their ongoing commitment to the standards to which this magazine aspires. Due to the pandemic conditions we have experienced within the last year we have been challenged in our effort to expand our pool of submissions. We extended additional invitations to various departments in the hopes to be able to welcome more and new authors and artists, and with the collaboration with various department heads we were successfully able to provide this opportunity to the vast majority of campus staff and students.

This experience has shown me the steps on how to build a published hardcopy, collaborate in new ways with other departments and reach out to the community. Things that I will definitely keep with me for the rest of my life.

In addition I had the pleasure to have personally seen spectacular works of all sorts from the submissions we have received this year. Each and every student who has submitted their pieces are incredibly talented. My heart was filled with joy with each acceptance letter that was sent out as I imagined the smiles on their faces.

LETTER FROM *THE EDITORS*

To the students who were unable to get accepted in this year's edition I encourage you wholeheartedly to please continue submitting your work. Each piece is a wonderful creation that I can assure you will bring a smile to someone's face and make their day.

We look forward to working with all of you as we continue to make Signet a success and we welcome your submissions as well as feedback as authors and readers of this magazine.

Sincerely

Dana Sanders
Co-senior editor

"There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside of you"

-Maya Angelou

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SPOTLIGHT: Daniel Gonzalez

Mariapaz Gomez

Fashion designer and Queens alumni, Daniel Gonzalez, began his design journey after moving from Pereira, Colombia to the United States. His first encounter with the world of art was with an interior designer friend that his family stayed with when they arrived in Miami. He then moved to North Carolina, where he and his family settled.

While attending elementary school, he was introduced to folklore dancing, where he met his future dance partner. Together, they began to perform in shows and take different classes to move up in the dance world. After some time, Daniel and his dance partner decided to focus on the ballroom dance style and as they began to train, they found themselves in need of dance costumes for the competitions they were participating in. This was what incentivised him to begin to design and create dance dresses for his partner.

Eventually, the word about his designs spread throughout the dance world and he began to receive clients from different parts of the city. This was the start of his first business, *Modelo Couture Designs.* For Daniel, this became a "glorified hobby"; something that he worked on while training to become a professional dancer and finishing his degree in business. However, as time went on, he became enamored with the experiences he was living through as he created pieces for his clients, and he used each moment to master his craft.

For the next 10 years, Daniel Gonzalez gained experience on working with different body types, playing with fabrics, conducting fittings and professionally executing shows and productions in both the worlds of design and dance. He felt as if he had acquired the proper knowledge and skill set to create and

launch a fashion line that represented him and his style.

As he commenced the planning of his line, he came face to face with the challenges that were brought with the COVID-19 pandemic. He was left with no consistent income due to his projects coming to a halt. He found himself with a room full of fabrics and a sketchpad covered in designs. While he was filled with uncertainty, he saw this as the best opportunity to launch a business that could be run and shared 100% online. He decided that it was time to bring his designs to life.

Daniel created and launched a fashion line that was inspired by his own love for bold details and comfortable clothing. He spent hours looking at different personal pieces and examining what he liked most about them. He then later combined his taste in style with the different inspirations that he found within men's vintage wear and French military utility uniforms. He intended to make women feel powerful and feminine. He wanted to have the women wearing his designs to feel "elevated within themselves".

Daniel launched his winter/spring line in October and is currently beginning to create his designs for his summer collection. Women all around the city are booking appointments and shopping online to obtain the unique and elegant pieces. The launch was a success and was well received by his audience, and this is only the beginning for *Daniel Gonzalez Designs*.

Little Thoughts

Allison Blackwell

often,
throughout the
day, (I have) these
    little thoughts
circle in my head,
water down the
drain.
most times,
not to see them,
    distracted
with life and
its miniscule ways,
but every
once a while, they
    surface,
a kiss for the
air, and
(I smile) in
reminiscence, so
    set them
to sail,
    tiny ships
in bottles
aswim on the stream for
clustering rocks to collect and
caress, a hold for thoughts lost
and longed, caught and caged
until
    you

stumble
    across
and
    discover
beside the bank
my small cache
of half-mind
love
messages,
gathered in a
fallen-blossom
bouquet.

Paper Fish

Connor Lindsay

You, paper fish
were a crafted wish
when he was just a child.

With well-drawn sides
and your bright green eyes,
his markers had gone wild.

He cut out shapes
and used clear scotch tape
to make your fins and gills.

Thin scribbled lines
create scales and spines
showcasing all his skills.

Feelings of pride
for you still reside
within the heart of me.

For what a catch!
And no simple sketch
my boy pulled from the sea.

He formed each trait
trying to emulate
Artwork that I had made,

but this thin bass
of a different class
his own style portrayed.

I always thought
once he had been taught
he'd stay right by my side.

But he swam on,
my creative son,
and went against the tide.

After

Nia Murat

After is pink
eyes from getting
high, tired lies
told around a runny
nose. *After* is
ink blots of blood
crawling up the walls,
creeping into
view around careful,
covering hands. *After*
is the disaster –
bruised ribs and
twisted fingers held
together by pleading
and prayer. *After*
is battered
knees and groveling
before an eerie space
that isn't home. *After*
is a year, then
another, then
another, then – a
call, chapped lips
spewing slander
disguised pleas.
After is wandering,
a limbo once you
wade through the ashes
of *Now.*

Thank You For The Good Times

Astrid Bridgwood

When my aunt died I spent four hours in my backyard
listening to Oasis.

I was home alone two days After Death wishing
There was space for grief summer-hot in open air
Strawberry popsicle lounging in my mouth, cement blister-hot
Carving welts in the soles of my feet.

Cancer eats Until everything is white-bright and hospital-bitter.
I am trying to swallow the world. It lingers heavy on my skin
Wonderwall starts with a cough, suffocating into patio-pillows.

July is a month bleeding at the seams, chlorine-soaked with
Sand-filled palms and candy-wet lips. July is a month for living
I spent it running away.

My mom asks me if I'll be home for dinner be home
Before eleven
Stay home. Tinny bluetooth beseeching: *Just try not to worry,*
you'll see us someday
Stop crying your heart out.

I remember grief in sparks
Fire-cracker burns itching scars into my fingertips. I'm standing silent
cheeks wet, clouds
Cotton-candy pink and burning as the sun sets.

People believe
That they're gonna get away for the summer.

Storm gathering dark penultimate, a supernova burst
Champagne rain cracks wide, egg-yolk sparks of lightning
Air sopping with storm
Men selling Falafel staring from the street.

I'm on my knees
in a puddle, soaked to the skin. My friends
Wincing, waiting by the truck to take me home. She's dead she's dead, *don't you get it?*
She's dead.

The Fairest Of Them All

Hana Newnam

In the summer, Grandma used to call me Snow White. Sitting in the shade, I lamented my pale skin, gazing at the bronzed limbs of my older cousins as they laid out in the sun. I longed to join them, to be just as beautiful, but I stayed inside and hidden from the sun's rays, rubbing green goop into the peaks of my shoulders and the tip of my nose, feeling relief from the sun's scorching kiss. Pouting, I put on Dad's old t-shirt to protect my already blistered skin before venturing back into the heat. Grandma told me to smile, and promised me that no matter what, with my hair black as night and my lips red as a rose, I was still the fairest of them all.

Pursuit Of Happiness

Hana Newnam

Thirteen. Zoloft.
Major Depressive Disorder. Panic Attacks. Social Anxiety.
A trip to the hospital.

Fourteen. Prozac. Buspar.
Major Depressive Disorder. Anxiety Disorder.
Slowly recovering.

Fifteen. Sixteen. Seventeen. Eighteen. Nineteen.

Twenty.
Abilify. Effexor. Lexapro.
Wellbutrin. Lamictal. More Buspar.
Manic Depression. Major Depressive Disorder. Anxiety Disorder.
Failing classes. Three naps a day.

Twenty and a half.
Adderall.
ADHD.
Focus. Only eating half a burger.

Twenty-One.
Wellbutrin. Buspar. Lamictal. Adderall.
A glass of wine. Maybe a smoke.

Years of failed concoctions.
Hospitalizations.
Therapy.

And I'm still missing
the laughter and smiles,
the easy-going friend,
the academic star.

I'm still missing
me.

In July

Ellie Fritsch

~a ghazal for Evelyn Grubb~

While the lion and the crab struggled to own the July
night sky, she entered the world on the 22nd of July.

I entered on the morning's crimson tide
on the same Sunday after another 85 years of July.

She told me come, and beckoned me into this world so
I would burst forth on a blue morning in mid-July.

Come, she said, and bring to me your flowers
and your hours in the shade of an afternoon in July.

Together, we'd sing, while I danced around
until like a tulip, I'd wilt in the heat of July.

I followed her lead, always turning to face the sun like our favorit
sunflowers, just opening their petals near the end of July.

And, oh, how she taught me to live! Live full, live free!
And that she did—she lived to see her 97th July.

And she left grinning, singing to the other side.
But I still see her, each day of lovely July.

She may have left us in September,
but, Evelyn, dear, you lived in the beauty of July.

The Forgotten Teddy

Ellie Fritsch

The forgotten teddy
that sits among the dust bunnies
and half-remembered monsters
does not realize he has been forgotten.

He sits patiently waiting,
with one paw thrown over
his head of soft tan curls,
button-brown eyes forever
pinned on the lace-trimmed

bedding that sweeps against the floor.
He slipped through the sliver of worlds
that divided bed and wall into the
land of dark and forgotten things.

At first you blamed your mother,
thinking she had stolen him away
to the prison of water and soap.
Knowing how scared he must be,

you pressed your face to the spinning
glass of the washing machine,
anxiously awaiting the beep that allowed
you to rescue your most beloved friend.

But one day you got up,
and you didn't need him anymore.
And following quickly on the heels of

realization comes forgetting,

and in the morning the feel
of his weight in your arms,
the soft scratch of polyester on skin will
be nothing more than a stolen relic of a past life.

And still he waits, knowing
one day you'll reach down, fingers searching
blindly through the darkness and dust
to grasp his well-worn, and well known paw.

"There you are,"
he can hear you say. And with a kiss
to his thread bare nose, you'll tuck him
back between the covers where he always belonged.

What Will We Tell Our Daughters?

Astrid Bridgwood

Women are mouths. You will spend your childhood naked
Staring open confusion at your reflection, desperate in front of your bathroom mirror
Gaping at bones knitted together at the elbow and your adolescence
Glued to the same surface starving aching *bones under the fat, I know it*
Hungry for the body of an eleven year old, ribs cresting through skin
Thinness staring through, if only you can reach it.

I will continue: I will warn her about the ticking scale
Measuring bones with fingers. I will smile, a wan mouth teeth white with fury
Face like a doll: perfect, clean. My husband will love me. I will be weeping.
Daughter, *darling* (because of course she will be),
I have been trying to write a poem about this since I started writing poems.
I am sorry. I still do not have the words. It will no longer be a conversation.

If she is a first-born, I will sit next to her on the couch and cry after dinner.
I will stare at her, red-weepy and foul how the rest never see me,
Beg penance beg forgiveness ask *Am I pathetic, darling?* I am still sorry.
I will explain, then, that there is no instant.

There is no bite you take and close your eyes to savor,
Every moment colored by the bathroom mirror after-meal.

I will warn her (the fourth truth), of bloating, swelling, the body stuffed full again.
Skin bubbling flesh rising like dough on your stomach disgust creeping bile
I knead it as I speak, naked like every mother balling skin under my hands
I could rip it off and start over. Body suffocating the girl loved.

I will repeat the first, but it will taste different this time
She will start to show the darkness about the eyes of a girl mirror-haunted.
I will sit her down at the table and ask her if she is cold. My husband will be eating
Meat, because men are bloody. I will laugh a little drinking water through a straw
My daughter chewing ice next to me. *Suffering is inherited.*
Traipsing down memory lane,
He will chuckle at my abstinence and my daughter will go to bed without dinner.

I will ask about the numbers. How long have you been counting? And then, quieter
What have I done? Mind fogged and stuffed full of percentages, no-one thinks more about food than the hungry. I am sick with it
By now it will start to show. My daughter will wince when she looks at me
Making secret vows about dinner about age about beauty.

I will ponder out loud the lightness of flying. She curls into a ball on the couch.
My husband comes to bed in the dark tells me *I love you* voice tight with insult

Supper heavy in my stomach. I will wake dizzy and fast until he calls me *sweet*.
My daughter will be home late from school, eaten dinner at a friend's house.

I will be old. She will be older.
Sat down next to me on the bench, body open around accusation. *Explain* as we watch the dog. I will say, *I've always been tall.* She will look at me
Confusion writ on her face like she's five again.

I will continue, eyes steadily forward. *All my friends were tiny girls*
Sweet five-two petite girls *I loomed over in my mass*, fat boiling on my stomach and at my jaw.
Me, hunchbacked and loping behind them: a deformed dog panting after beauty.
My daughter will cough politely, fetch her father to drag me home.

I will apologize once, when she tells me she is having a son. I will be stooped under guilt's heft
Begging forgiveness from the girl I have wronged, my mirror-warped image.
She will look at me with sallow eyes ringed red and wrong asking me how we got here, in this hospital bed. I will have nothing left to say. My stomach will speak for me.

Transitioning

Owen Panos

It always starts off with the same question
"So, what are you?" They say.
The "I-can't-figure-out-what-you-are"
suggestion.
I try to keep the body hatred at bay.
Desperately trying to gauge,
If my answer will send them into a rage

I constantly live in a state,
Explaining who I am.
Where I accept my fate,
To those who call me "ma'am."
Every
"I'm-out-in-public-yet-don't-look-male"
feeling.
I say "it's okay" to myself, repeating.

With my family of course,
Who all had a hard time.
Some hate without remorse,
Some, to this day still see me as a crime.
I've gained many, lost some.
Many have cussed my mom out.
But I don't allow myself to be glum,
As my mom and I ignore them, no doubt.
She tells me "It doesn't matter hun"
Because she'll always see me as her son

I long for the day where I don't have to explain
It's not a "God-made-you-the-way-you-are" phase.
That, no it's not something wrong with my brain .
For the day that I live without the daze.
A male perceived by society.
The real part of me wails.
Being in public without anxiety.
To take my first inhale.
To be me,
To be called "he"

But I have to endure the wait,
Drowning in my head and chest.
The awful pressure that I hate,
These feelings I wish I could lay to rest.
Patiently, I wait for T,
To release the pressure in my heart.
Imagining future me,
In a body I can restart.

So when people question
"What are you?"
I say with discretion,
"I
    am
        me."

Ode To Disorder

Anna Julia Vissioli Rodrigues

A Disney princess,
    that's how you molded me.

Now I reflect through the mirror
    as a gem.

I was a chubby stomach
    wobbling along to the strolling princesses.

You transformed me into
    a breathing skeleton.

Ribs protruding out
    piercing flesh

Could snap
    like a wishbone.

Tree sticks for legs,
    roots bristling along
that leave me staggering.

Gut jabbed by a boxer,
    a deflated balloon.

Gut can squeeze into dollies' clothes,
    the sparking, lacey, floral ones.

You're worthy of feeling famished.
Skipping meals, sweets,
and all that's swell.

You're worthy of voyages
to powder room
that leave me with spew glossed lips.

Mother's brimming plates,
glares of judgement,
endless tales of caution,
she can keep them.

Teachers' worried stares,
chit-chat by shut doors,
secret conferences,
they can keep them.

I'll keep you.

Even The Gods

Nia Murat

Let those petty gods blot me from this life as though I am a speck of dust. I am your disciple, only. Aphrodite could stomp me beneath her celestial heel, Artemis strike me down with a volley of indignant arrows. Apollo could rage at the blasphemy of my psalms, and still I would sing. They are nothing to me, not when I worship at the simple altar of your feet.

Even Zeus could charge my every atom with wattage, cremate me as a wildfire does the leaf; I'd still shine with all the hubris from every mortal living, dead, and yet to come. You are the primordial foundation of my universe, the sunrise that brought warmth to my night. Even the gods must shield their eyes when faced with your rustic brilliance. Even the gods pale when compared to a smile set on your lips.

On the Corner of Fifth Street

Mikayla Sengle

Bartenders hustled through the cracks, pouring
glasses of bourbon across slick table tops into
the hands of drunk men. Women
danced well into the night until the
sun drew upon the slits in the dawning curtains
that hung onto the floor. Hustlers stashed
their pockets and bid farewell to the stripper
pole. Taxis lined the street corners, waiting
for the night owls to commit the walk of shame:
half dressed, lipstick smeared and empty pockets.
Mid-morning, the bar was vacant, as if no one
had been there at all. Vodka spills stained the somber
wooden floors while divots from stripper heels glistened
under the spotlight. Bloodied knuckle imprints clung to
the walls above ashtrays collecting dust from their leftover
cigarettes. Only would it open its doors to those
seeking something more the next night, after
someone had come to clear the mess and prepare for
another round of chaos.

Divorced, Beheaded, Died

Brooke Wright

My love, we were so happy together.
You saved me from a life of monotony,
I saved you from a loveless marriage.
The church was so angry, but
We didn't care.
We could finally hold each other in daylight.

But my love, when
Did it all change?
Maybe it was the birth of Elizabeth?
She may not have been the son you wanted, but
She is who you got.
And one day she will wear your crown.

Or perhaps someone else caught your eye,
Like I did before.
My love, was I not enough?
Was our daughter not enough?
Perhaps the loss of my head was inevitable, or
Perhaps we could have kept our tempers in check.

It's amazing how quickly someone can fall
From your affections.
Catherine before me.
Jane after me.
But there were others.
There were always others.

After The Rain

Allison Blackwell

Steam curled into air
off of black pavement too hot
for bare toes to touch.

Mist draped the fence,
the mailbox, the car,
and mirrors puddled
on sultry stone.

But the clouds were gone!

The storm was over!

Flying legs flew
over the brick step
and out the door.

Laughter pealed
off into the sky,
after the rain.

Yellow boots shattered
reflections, showering
crystals into green.

A black lab leaped
after her, frolicking
to her squeals,
until swept up,
she rested
in loving arms,
giggling in all delight.

Nintendo Switch

Allison Schwai

The Nintendo Switch is the house cat
of the console kingdom, its natural habitat
set upon the beanbag with the Cheetos stain,
in the arms of the nine-to-fiver on the morning train,
tucked behind the middle-schooler's science folder,
playing in-game music for the flower shop owner,
in the mother's closet waiting for an apology,
sleeping in its port beneath the tv;
one of many small and curious wonders,
unconcerned with all the others.
Its internal fan, a purring attention hog,
isn't its biggest flaw in the gaming catalogue.
Joycon drift, competition destroyer,
I've lost more than a few games
due to that money mongering;
made by a company so focused on shares,
it's no wonder their systems get smaller
and smaller like a shift in DNA, improper
evolution, signature blunder
of the beast bigger than brothers and mothers
and sisters and cousins and gamers and fathers--
so enjoy what you can, it's all for the dollars.

Pardon My Heart

Hana Newnam

Pardon my heart when she talks too long about too many things—
the ins and outs of visual effects,
the plot twists and lore of Star Wars,
the intricacy of social media algorithms—
she knows I'll always listen when she gets carried away.
If she apologizes profusely, pardon her then, too,
because she wants to confirm that you still love her,
that she wasn't rude.
She will always be late, and ask for your pardon,
her hair was too frizzy or her clothes didn't match.
But, my heart, I would wait through infinite outfit changes for you. Pardon my heart, again, when she coccons herself in the comforter
and becomes a human heater, waking you up, sticky with sweat.
Pardon my heart when she drives a bit slow,
she's carrying her giggly, precious cargo home from the bar to tuck her in like it is her only job.

So please, pardon my worry
when my heart walks into a world
full of sickness, full of hand sanitizer and standing six feet apart,
just so you could buy the new Animal Crossing
and hear a pardon for her tired eyes
because she's gone to bed late, again.

Happy Holidays! Love, The Boyers

Evan Boyer

My sister and I had made a hobby out of trying to convince our extended family--solely through the medium of Christmas cards--that my father was still as sharp as ever, and that any rumors of him having, say, advanced vascular dementia were nothing but slanderous hogwash. Meticulously staged and flawlessly executed, they were true works of art. One such photo depicted father and me—both clad in revolting Christmas sweaters—"collaborating" on an especially enigmatic crossword puzzle at the kitchen table. We had put a pen in his hand (which was, naturally, the most ostentatious one Claire and I could find in the house, a gold-inlaid Waterman that weighed about half a pound), whereas I, opposite him, wielded nothing but a miniature candy cane (sucked to a spike) and my own unshaven slowness. Claire had managed to snap the picture precisely as Dad was muttering some gibberish, of which the only comprehensible word was "lollipop," and as he spoke his nonsense I affixed to my face a look of doe-eyed, humble absorption, as if hearing (and maybe comprehending) some masterfully esoteric insight that would solve the crossword and win us the holy grail of aimless intellect, the Wall Street Journal Coffee Mug.

Another photo showed Dad and me, again at the kitchen table, absorbed in a fictional game of chess. I wore the numb expression of a lobotomite just roused from surgery. We of course arranged the board to convey that father was unequivocally whooping my ass; fourteen of "my" pieces lay defunct by his elbow, whereas all of his pieces (save two pawns that had been captured through spectacularly asinine trades) remained on the board, hounding my blissfully doomed king. One imagined Dad then calling

checkmate—a call brimming with the scarcely contained disappointment of a Mensa father addressing his unexpectedly moronic son—and then numbly snatching my king for the umpteenth time.

The actual written contents of these everything-is-a-ok cards was cool, perfunctory, and detached: "Happy Holidays! Love, The Boyers." The cards were then inserted into a cream-colored envelope, licked shut, and garnished with a sticker that reflected the holiday at hand: a simple, symmetrical Christmas tree adorned with a luminous star.

One time, my great aunt Nancy—in a rather gauche move—wrote back and, after some curt well wishes, said that she would be "overjoyed" if we could send her one of Dad's books, "preferably signed." She said it was for her brother, who apparently had developed quite a crush on my father and his Doc Adams mystery novels (Doc Adams being essentially a modern emulation of Doyle's Holmes, the only notable difference being that while Holmes was whisperingly purported to be asexual, Doc Adams was constantly thwarted by his own capillary-bursting libido). Not wanting to let the good-hearted vixen down, I trudged up to the attic(where boxes of dad's unsold books languished), fetched a different book than the one she requested, and resolved to sign it myself. First, I needed an inscription. I decided I wanted something either a.) odiously pretentious, or b.) utterly nonsensical. After an hour of sweaty deliberation, with my pen hovering tremulously over the title page of The Whale's Footprints, I managed to strike both chords: May from these humble pages sluice the luster of a compelling campfire yarn. I followed this nonsense with a facsimile of his signature, giggling dementedly as I did so. And then, having through my dogged intelligence and effervescent, loopy script transmogrified a first edition hardcover into a signed first edition hardcover, my exhilaration subsided, I cracked a beer, plopped onto the couch, and began to imagine myself emblazoned on a dust jacket. I was wearing an expensive cardigan, my hair was combed and compliant, and

my eyes--usually steely with a mute but defining perversion--were lit up with the heady exhilaration of talent--for but a fleeting moment in the ceaseless gyrating of the cosmos--paying off.

Identity

Katie Pittman

"What you're experiencing isn't normal, but it does have a name." When I was first diagnosed with general anxiety disorder, I thought it was the end of the world. All of my previous experience with anxiety was panic attacks, nerve wracking thoughts, and negative spirals, but now I was being told that what I was feeling were symptoms of GAD. It didn't make sense, but it gave me something to latch onto as I figured out what anxiety meant for me. After several meetings with therapists, psychologists, and psychiatrists, I realized that anxiety wasn't the end of the world, but the beginning of a new one. A world of coping mechanisms and other people experiencing the same things I was. Being given the label of anxiety helped me to find comfort in my disordered thoughts. The label of anxiety shouldn't hold negative connotations to those being given the diagnosis because it provides clarity, community, and confidence.

The fall of 2017 and the spring of 2018 were the most transformative times in my life. I experienced partial hospitalization and full residential treatment for an eating disorder and general anxiety disorder. I left my home and my family in order to fully focus on my recovery and the changes I had to make for myself to survive. Life became so much harder before I came out on the other side as a whole new person. Through these trying times, I had to relearn who I was and everything that I believed. We talk about identity and how it shapes who we are, but at this point in my life I had to find myself all over again from scratch. Things that I used to believe and do were no longer things that kept me feeling alive, but rather trapped and confined. I clung to the little things that I had previously taken for granted, dreaming of the day where I would be free to experience the world all over again through a

new set of eyes. My whole life had been clouded by this feeling of oppression and failure, but once I was diagnosed and began seeing a therapist to talk out these feelings, the clouds became thinner and the sun was peeking through. For me personally, my anxiety had been a hidden force tearing at me without me even consciously being aware of it, until my eating disorder brought it out in full force. After my diagnosis, I struggled to address my thoughts that I had grown so accustomed to as being normal. With this onslaught of negativity, my panic started to rise and I didn't know how to control the attacks that would take me down. I had to fight an internal battle that I couldn't see but could feel all too well. On top of this, I had to relearn how to eat and fuel the body that had become nothing but a shell. There were times where I lost myself to my disorder, when it didn't seem worth it anymore to fight. I remember feeling that it would be so much easier just to lie down and never get back up again. It was those times that held me back from the life that I missed so much but felt that I would never get to see again. Now when I look back all I see is the darkness that I let myself fall into, no longer a diagnosis but a death sentence. It took me six months to crawl out of hell and back into the land of the living. Each day became a little bit better, living became easier. Through my transformation, I could see the beauty in so many things that it became overwhelming. The darkness didn't disappear completely, but it no longer loomed over me. As I came to terms with this new life, I realized that my diagnosis wasn't the end all be all, but rather another aspect of my personality that I had to adapt to in order to overcome.

Mental health disorders in our current society have one of two ways to be observed: either as a setback that comes with its equal amounts of ups and downs, or an irreversible disease that cannot be cured. Anxiety has become a household name for many: as an excuse or just to describe a bad day, when in reality it can be a serious condition that haunts people's lives. But, even though anxiety is seen in a highly negative light, it holds several positive aspects that provide comfort to those diagnosed.

having a blanket statement isn't fair to someone who might present differently from a severe case. Textbook examples of anxiety do happen, but every human being responds differently. The one common trait that responds in any and all situations is that the diagnosed patient can find clarity, community, and confidence in their diagnosis and way of living.

Clarity, Webster's dictionary defines this term as being the quality of being coherent and intelligible. With anxiety, oftentimes you cannot verbally express what it is you are feeling, and if you can, then your thoughts are garbled and don't fully make sense. With a diagnosis and treatment plan, this confusion is able to be cleared away and given a term to explain where these thoughts are coming from. In my personal experience, the clarity that came to me after meeting with a psychiatrist was able to help me break down the walls that my anxiety had built up holding me back from recovering. My negative thought spirals finally had a word to describe them other than chaos. All the thoughts that couldn't be defined or sorted through had an umbrella to dry them out. By beginning to unpack what was going through my head, the label of anxiety was no longer a strange one, but a term that I could use to describe myself coherently.

In the world of mental health treatment, a strong support system is key to making strides in recovery. This can be family, friends, doctors, therapists, and other patients. Basically, anyone who is there to support you through hard times. In today's world, you can even find people virtually who have been through your current situation in order to provide comfort and a shoulder to lean on. My personal support system was a web of people that I interacted with in treatment as well as my family back at home. This community that held me up motivated me to not only get better for myself, also but get better so that I could rejoin them and thank them for their efforts. With any mental illness, there is always someone who has come before you and experienced similar situations, so the community is waiting and ready to help.

Finally, confidence is a critical aspect of any sort of recovery period. After my diagnosis, I had lost all confidence in myself, and I had to start from square one in order to build it up again. Through my treatment and the new perspective I had on life, I regained my confidence tenfold, able to see myself in a whole new way. Confidence is key to recovering from any mental illness, and the earlier you realize this, the easier it will be on yourself in order to recover.

My definition and experience with anxiety is not one size fits all; in fact, the Oxford definition of anxiety is simply, "a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease, typically about an imminent event or something with an uncertain outcome." This description of anxiety lessens the severity of its effect on a person. This is the everyday anxiety that someone might experience. To some, this is all that anxiety is, nervousness about an event or thinking about something a bit too much, when in reality it can be debilitating. The way that I see it, anxiety as an emotion is a separate entity from clinical anxiety, and in order to help those who are secretly struggling, this needs to be a commonly spread idea. If we continue to treat anxiety like heightened nerves, more people will be too afraid to reach out for help. Lessening one's experience leads to negative connotations on those who seek help and treatment.

In conclusion, anxiety to me is nothing more than a label that helped me to find myself over again after going off the edge. It gave me a meaning to my thoughts, a group of supporters to keep me sane, and a more positive outlook on myself and my life.

La maison est une chose simple

Sydney Schwai

In order to talk about the immediate past tense in French, one must learn the verb être. The most popular way for non-native French speakers to learn this is through the exercise "La Maison d'Être." La maison means "the house" and être is the verb "to be." To translate it in its purest form, "la maison d'être" means "the house of being." When one knows how to utilize the house of being, one can talk about most anything in their past.

La maison est une chose simple, un lieu d'être, un état d'appartenance.

Home is not eating foam soap, pressed into your eleven-year-old mouth like a gun to the back of your head, when you talk bad.

Home is making pancake sausage corndogs for breakfast in the microwave. Thirty seconds, turn. Thirty seconds, turn. It looks like a corn dog but smells like a fluffy, doughy pancake. It burns like a pizza popper fresh from the air fryer.

Home is the point-giver in baseball, the place everyone wants to get to or stay at. You want to go home. But what if you didn't? What if the pitcher pitched, the hitter hit, and instead of running and staying the hitter just booked it across the field, over the fence, and just left? Why did they leave? Why did they even hit if they weren't going to come back?

Home is why they call it homeroom even though you only see those other students for fifteen minutes every day.

Home is a twin bed you've had for fifteen years that you still use even though your little sister has a queen bed. You say you like a twin bed because you do. It's fine.

Home is telling your creative writing class that your little sister has a queen bed because at age fourteen she still sleeps next to your mom in order to fall asleep.

Home is the place to go after March 19th when COVID is suddenly happening and campus is closing in two days and you'd better pack up and leave.

Home is like yoga—sometimes you want to be good and stretch and other times you'll sprain your shoulders for two days because you sat still at the computer too long.

Home is emptying the dishwasher without asking and getting free dinners on clean plates.

Home is calling your mom to ask which pot to use on the stove because you only made ramen noodles once without her, and you don't want to mess up one of her pans even though they are not stainless steel and you are not using oil.

Home is doing the dishes without asking so mom wakes up to a clean kitchen.

Home is lunch with your mom at Panera Bread after never doing so because you are a sister of three and you have to share.

Home is in your recipe box with nine recipe cards. You thought you'd fill at least thirty of them over the summer for your new home after graduation, but you have a good nine filled front to back.

Home is a pizza popper that gushes pizza blood and guts when it stays too long in the air fryer. You have to wait for it to cool down to crunch in your mouth without burning your tongue.

Home is an investment, both literally and emotionally. You think of your dad when you say this because he works at the bank. Even though he does risk management and not investments, you think of him.

Home is knowing every morning, Sunday to Saturday, your dad will still be hunch-backed over his computer even though he has a new Lumbar support chair.

Home is watching every new Avengers movie with your dad—sometimes twice—even though he asks "Where are they going" or "Who's Thanos" at the beginning of Endgame.

Home is not worrying about parents finding texts on your phone with their malware.

Home is free speech and listening to your best friend's depression story and how she was a show-pony to her parents, the model oldest child and not a liberal lesbian suffering from

years of Christian indoctrinations.

Home is being glad your parents would accept you if you happened to be a liberal lesbian suffering from years of Christian indoctrinations. But you are not, so you do not need to worry about this.

Home is agreeing not to go to church on Saturday night because your mom is too tired to drive, and she hates when your dad drives because he is prone to hitting deer and hugging the centerline. Sorry God. Will send good vibes tomorrow.

Home is sitting beside your friend just checking your phones, not worrying about picking up groceries or getting on a call, and just vibing.

Home is waking up to a meme on your text chain with the sparkly eye emoji.

Home is sitting in front of the big-screen TV and playing Breath of the Wild with your eyes closed and shouting through laughs on how not to drive the motorcycle over the cliff or into a tree and turning Link into a ragdoll.

Home is decorating your Animal Crossing houses with plants and then decorating your real bedroom with fake plants. When you squint at the pink Ikea petals, you see thread lines.

Home is playing the same level over and over again so they can get it even though you already have.

Home is sending art of an anime girl with pigtails and bangs to your sister over Twitter because you know it is adorable to her.

Home is *Among Us* nights over Discord.

Home is a couch. Once it was a maroon couch, dark and heavy with golden studs lining the arms. Then it was a velvet grey with leather accents, a tall hard backing. Your mom moved this one to the office because she didn't want to see it anymore. Now it is a cream lounger from Ikea. Or Target. Your mom still isn't sold after two years with this one.

Home is finding friends that like the "you" you, the you that makes "omg he's such a scrub" jokes at game nights yet seamlessly compliments everyone's new shoes with a winning,

wholesome smile.

Home is a compromise to play three hours of Minecraft when you would rather not be grooming a neighbors garden because he put his ugly block house next to yours and it needs to be beautified, and you would rather be working on your art project due that Friday.

Home is liking and retweeting your thoughts in your own head.

Home is telling your little sister she's being overly analytical so she can move on and find a new Instagram boy to comment on. He'll delete the post that night anyways.

Home is having their birthday under their Contact on your phone. You usually forget to ask for it.

Home is unwrapping same-old gift cards and clothes for your birthday while you spend weeks before Christmas tailoring and painting personalized illustrations for your sisters' wallpapers.

Home is when you look back and realize all you have ever gotten for your sister for her birthday is your art. You know this is not presumptuous because it is free and good quality.

Home is giving your sister free artwork that you charge clients forty-five dollars for, and when she complains you don't draw for her enough, you don't tell her she's lucky she's not paying forty-five dollars because you like spending time with her instead of demanding her money.

Home is the same-old plump cotton-stuffed animal turkey you use for Thanksgiving decorating every year.

Home isn't waking up the morning of your high school graduation and seeing your pink lawn flamingos strewn across the neighbors' yards. You couldn't find one, and on quiet nights you occasionally wonder which asshole down the street stole it.

Home is walking across the bridge in your house parallel to three great arched windows. Two are tinted while the one on the left is a shade lighter because it's been replaced once before and never got matched correctly and it still has ghost remains of bird scuffing because birds only love to fly into that

one.

Home is cleaning up cat puke. Your black cat pretends she did not do it. Her brother pats dusts over it as if to cover it up. It cannot be covered.

Home is a bartering system. You think of your Dad when you say this even though he is at the bank with real money and does Risk Management.

Home is a Secret Santa with everyone's names on the tags. You have only done Secret Santa twice, but this comparison entertains you.

Home is a pissing contest at eleven pm about "I did this for you" and "you didn't do this critique for me" that ends with you crying and going to bed with a "fuck you text" and waking up the next morning with the critique completed with an hour and a half's worth of constructive comments and appreciation for your work.

Home is when you get pissed and argue and step back and not step away

Home is not staying silent when you have something to say.

Home is getting a full-body illustration from your new favorite artist of three of your original characters after being sneakily asked for reference pictures for "no reason, I just think they're cool." You hang this in your room in a frame.

Home is breaking the frame of your birthday present of your three original characters because your sister slammed it off the wall in an argument in your room.

Home is being your biggest fan even though you don't feel like it.

Home isn't the basement of your grandparents' house in Milwaukee with its iron-scented slot machine in one corner and spaghetti-arm "paintings" of Jim and Joan hanging on the wall under yellow spotlights. Your family left their fiftieth early because it was an inside joke for everyone who lived in Wisconsin. You live in Charlotte.

Home is "you'll do better next time."

Home is when you tell yourself "I know I'll get it done; I know you can do it."

Home is a schedule that doesn't discriminate time zones, a regular flow. You say this is a good thing for you but six am classes are hell for someone else.

Home is knowing where everything is organized. And when you don't, you know it is still somewhere in your room. Like your closet. Or your second dresser in your dresser for all the optional seasonal clothes you happen to have nowhere else to put.

Home is not a checklist to keep things in order.

Home is a fuzzy Sherpa jacket. You do not wear it often, because it is too thick and hot, and you will not wear it outside because you do not want to ruin its velvety softness. You hang it in your closet and pet it when you fetch a jacket; your fingers stroke the soft white surface and you say, "yes I will wear you but not today."

Home is humming in the kitchen when no one else is around.

Home is the sound of cicadas in summer, the creak of an old porch, the scratchy pollen covered porch chair, the spring breeze through the screen. A distant windchime.

Home is a simple thing, a place of being, a state of belonging.

Home

Madi Bednarik

Here is a very long list: Macintosh candles, and harvest incense, and the eerie black stillness of a winter night in a house that's all windows. When the last brush of fall turns too frigid, there's the smell of the forced hot air through vents well-worn like rusted pennies. My childhood home has an open floor plan where sound travels, creaking stairs and sliding glass doors, the murmurings of murder mysteries through the mustard walls and the frustrated yelling at a football game from the giant sectional in the family room. I remember Christmas garland on the banisters and fake candlesticks in the windowsills, always picking real trees, hanging a wreath on the bright red front door, and the running joke that the holiday gravy boat belonged to Nazis, which isn't really funny, but it is because it didn't. It's only Austrian (which has a whole different aura of evil to me now, how he could have been home and never was).

I walk in from school and there's pots and the little Italian coffee maker on the stove in the mess of a kitchen with the heinous wallpaper we left up anyway, and a table with water marks. And pasta and fresh basil and dried oregano and tomato paste. I'm greeted by a dog, fur the color of the inside of a nectarine, getting old that looks like a polar bear and still acts like a puppy. When I leave the front yard on the days I go run, it's the scent of the laundry room leaking from the cracked windows, seeping through the walls: Downy fabric softener— "April Fresh", Lysol sanitizer because current events. When I'm home for the holidays, it's accidentally teaching a toddler to say "dude" and her falling asleep hanging over my knee and off the couch.

In the summer it was the smell of rain while on Cranberry Lake after blowing up paddle boards. It was ducking through a tunnel

I was too tall for, almost falling in and then seeing a lily pad in real life for the first time. It's always been the ocean before going back to school and the soft white sand, the caw of seagulls, the salt of water, and sweat, and thick, muggy air sticking itself to the back of my neck. Falling asleep and getting sunburn. Sneaking off to the convenience store. Dreams of stealing the Sinclair dinosaur. And actually thieving cool beer glasses from restaurants, Modelo and Deep Eddie's and one with a fish. I brought that tradition to college. I have a friend who takes the "borrowing" too far and walks out with the seat of a high-top stool unnoticed or at least not challenged. When home was as small as high school it was the "A Star is Born" soundtrack. It was waxed gym floors and the squeak of sneakers, bruises the shape of lacrosse balls, red with a white point of impact in the center instead of turning black and blue. It was years and years of practice, and the very last time I ever sat down to talk afterward in the rotten conference room at the bottom of the stairs.

All of these, simply moments, some of them recurring. I am asked what home is and these are the images. And then I think a little harder...

I have a tendency to lucid dream. I close my eyes and I'm staring at my past self. She is only two or three years younger, hair blonder and face maybe rounder, but I feel so far removed, like it was eons ago.

"I want to go home." I am an outsider as she says it aloud to herself in our childhood bedroom, fever stricken, throat burning, head congested. Or maybe it was that she was too sad to sit up, feeling heavy and empty all at once. Maybe it was both. Either way, she was home. Tucked in her bed, sick and sad, longing for something intangible and beyond understanding. But then her mother walks in with a coffee from Dunkin'.

"Pumpkin's back!" And it goes unspoken that maybe that'll make her feel better. Though a coffee probably won't cure the breaking cold, Mom wants to help her feel better. She's relieved succinctly of the strange dread that had been taunting

"Bet you can't remember breathing out of your nose or being able to swallow without wanting to die. Yeah, you're going to feel like this forever." She's comforted then, and the wish for "home" is as fleeting as this sickness will feel in a week.

Home is contentedness.

I have a scar on my right knee. It looked like claw marks on my tiny body. I was in third grade when I ripped it open playing basketball at recess with Kyle. He had a crush on me, but we were eight, he was my friend, and I was nice to him because the other kids weren't, and he was fun. There were pieces of blacktop in my skin for months (the ER doctor wouldn't give me stitches). The lunch aide told me maybe I shouldn't play basketball in flip-flops and wear sneakers tomorrow. I always found that a bit insensitive. My leg was gushing blood and I was holding back tears like it would fall clean off at the joint if I let myself cry, or call out how badly I wanted my mom, how desperately I wanted to go home.

The nurse seemed inconvenienced to clean the scrape and slapped a Band-Aid on it. She called my mom. When it went to voicemail, the nurse sent me to music class to wait until Mom came to pick me up. I hated music. The teacher let me sit in the hall and cry. I bled through the Band-Aid, shook as I sat there. The loud boy who gave me anxiety attacks asked me what happened, if I was okay, when he passed me in the hall. He sat with me until my mom showed up. I wanted to dissolve into the grimy carpet.

The elementary school is remodeled now. My blood doesn't stain the hallways anymore. They're tile. And not as big and long and expansive as I remember. I wanted to go home so badly that day, I would have rather died instead of wait for another one of those agonizingly stretched out seconds. And then Mom got to the school. She felt so guilty for not getting there sooner. She ran into Kayla's mom at Shoprite and they had gotten to talking. She didn't hear her phone ring (She still never does). When I got to the car, I could finally the comfort of

my mother's arms. The pure relief, then nearly unhinged release of a hurt child—I'd never gotten stitches or been to the emergency room, but it would be okay now that I felt safe.

In the abstract sense of home, I've always felt called elsewhere. And I'm sure someone might sit me down and tell me it's God calling me home. Sin. Repent. Make it to heaven, His kingdom or whatever. That's why you've been itching your whole life, they'd tell me. That's what's missing—faith, they'd say with utter conviction with Corinthians 6:9-11 underlined by a cross tattooed on their forearm. Not to make fun, but even on the days where I'm inclined to believe it, I can't trust it, not wholly. Someone had to sit down and write the Bible. I'm a writer. We all take liberties.

This summer I watched The Universe on Netflix because this summer sucked, and I was sad. And how I could be sad and wallow in the suckiness watching a docuseries that made it glaringly obvious how small and inconsequential I am? Funny how I preach to my friends that every problem is valid and our feelings, however trivial in the grand scheme of things, matter. I thought on that for a little—the universe, the big bang. How do they know? I'm supposed to believe that my atoms are just uber compressed stardust? And I do more than I believe I came from a man's rib. But ashes to ashes.... Is that where we'll return? Just tiny pieces of the universe wanting to go home and one day we'll make it back to the great beyond. Finally feel content once we do?

Nah. I mean maybe. I don't know. But no one does, and it's all kind of corny and pretentious, don't you think?

I went home for a week, some friends on their respective campuses, and others staying put because the world's in shambles, scrambling in our attempts to adjust to a pandemic in the age of technology. And it's not that home wasn't nice; the pieces of all the stages of my old life laid out in front of me, memories I buried popping back up so casually I stared at the pictures from high school on my wall, the majority of them full of people I no longer speak to and am better for it, and despite

myself, I missed it. The kind of life I used to have, the way I used to have aimless fun. I feel like I've aged fifteen years. I had no idea. The worst I ever imagined from college in 2020 was nothing compared to how it actually went. Life came to a complete halt. It's been a while since every day was fun, since even the worst parts were still good. I told myself I'd never glamorize high school, but freshman year of college got ripped to shreds halfway through and even though those few months were better than all of high school, I've been longing for the predictability of years passed.

My best friend, Isabella, goes to college in Illinois. We grew up in New Jersey, and I went home, and she wasn't there. Home is being ten minutes away from Isabella. Driving across town to do nothing together or driving for hours through rural New Jersey listening to music and letting time pass. It's passing fast. I have only about four more months left of being ten minutes from her. Two summers and a smattering of winter breaks in between, and then real life. A fresh uneasy search for new definitions of home, new bodies of contentedness.

You know, I probably take her for granted in more ways than one, probably don't make it clear how much I appreciate her. She told me home is the people you feel the most comfortable around, friends and family, the people who make you feel safe. Maybe home is where you can express exactly how you feel without fear of judgement because even if there is judgment, it's out of love. You're not afraid to say what you want to say. Even unfiltered, you can recover because the people you call home have a capacity for forgiveness in them that cannot be replicated. There's this incomprehensible loyalty, this hardwired unwavering surety that no matter what you do, no matter the ways we unintentionally hurt one another, there will always be love—and maybe more importantly understanding. We can be loved without being understood. And maybe home is the space in which we can unapologetically be ourselves. No explanations, no questions. Just acceptance and room to be content with who we are.

I'm home in the hallways that smell like spiced candles and Italian spices, and I'm wearing my father's sweatshirt not because I didn't bring my own back or forget it's cold at home but because it's simply more comfortable. And I'm thinking about how I can't steal it and bring it back to Charlotte with me, which in the strangest use of the word is also home (and it's not a temporary one either), because he'll get mad. I'm just standing there in the little corridor in the middle of my parents' walk-in closets that leads to the master bathroom that I have walked through countless times in the past twenty years. Just standing there. And I realize one day this house won't be home anymore. And the people I call home will have passed. And there is so much life I have not lived and so many homes I have yet to tour. And when my father dies, I will get to wear his sweatshirts whenever I want.

Fingers

Ellie Fritsch

I run through the grocery store, fingers scattering like spiders fleeing a shoe before me. In my young mind, I am Peter Pan, a lost boy on an exciting adventure miles away from the store I am in. The store itself is full of overwhelming voices and scents, asfrigid coldairdrifts from the freezer section. At age seven the only way to cope with a trip to the grocery store was to be somewhere else in my mind, the only outward sign of mybeing in another world altogether is the twitching of my fingers as they conduct my runaway thoughts. I am yanked back to reality though when my grandmother grabs my fidgeting hands and tells me, "quit that, people are staring!"

I know now that she was trying to protect me, in her own way. It was the first time that I realized though, that constant movement was not a normal thing that other seven-year-olds did. But it wasn't the first or the last time peoplewould stare at my fidgeting. Just a few months later I would scribble on another firstgrader's work because he mocked the way I shook my hands when I got excited. I couldn't seem to control the way my hands twitched, and shook, and danced. Years later, I read a report bythe school occupational therapist from my first-grade year describing how much I moved in class and how she thought I may need to see an occupational therapist on the weekends.

I don't know why my fingers contort when my thoughts run away with me. I can not simply hold a pencil when I write, I must twirl and wiggle it as thoughtsgenerate and turn into something beautiful. Didn't other people see that the strange movement was my body responding to the whirling, buzzing, beautifulnoise that was the constant soundtrack in my head? Didn't they understand that it wasn't something I could control?

This was and is constant, as constant as the flow of one thought to another, neurons firing, shooting from my head straight to my fingertips. Fingers burrowing into carpet fibers, twisting rings that leave a red brand of agitation, plucking strings, and spinning pencils. Fingers that flutter and dance through the air, tracing patterns of thoughts and anxieties. Fingers grasping other fingers, fingers that write, paint, and play. It is a constant buzzing, moving, and then nothing, a death of passion in the clenching of fists and the crossing of arms. Hold still, the thought says, and so I do. So I try.

And why? What reason could God have possibly had for making me this way?I am a tangle of wires all firing at once, thoughts not even finishing before the next one takes it's place, agonies and anxieties flashing in my mind's eye, all of it happening so fast and all of it acted out in silence. The only tell-tale sign being the twitching of fingers.

Ms. Jacki would go on to lovinglynickname thisas"my bunny hands." She would also teach me how to hide my fidgets with the charm on a bracelet, the spinning of a necklace, the twirling of a strand of hair. She taught me to take the ordinary, everyday objects and use them so my thoughts could still kaleidoscope in a thousand spectrums of light and sound, but I could control them with the simple flick of the wrist. She would listen tome cry about how the girls on the playground teased me, would cup my hands between hers, and tell me that one day I would find a group of people who would love me for everythingI was, fidgets and all.

Today, I sit at my deskas a story begins to take shape in my head. I picture the characters, the way they hold themselves. I picture the lovely words I will use to describe the love interests eyes, or the words, bitter like coffee, that will describe a villain and his backstory. I am no longer Peter Pan, but a benevolent god building and creating whole worlds within my mind, and my fingers are scratching out a small groove, the first mark of creationmade for the love of an imaginary worldjust beginning

unfold.

I still do not understand why I respond so viscerally to stimuli, to my own thoughts, and to the actions of the world around me. I like to believe it is because my mind istoo strong, toobeautiful and wild, to be controlled. That I am made of sight, sound, passion, the brilliance of thoughts colliding in the creation of new worlds. I fidget because there is too much to be controlled, too much out of reach, and like a musicianwhocan't help but tap their foot to a song that is wonderfully written, I am dancing in my own way to a symphony that only I can hear. But if you close your eyes, and listen very closely you might hear the steady beat underneath all of the buzzing and whirling that says "you are enough, you are enough,"and I hope that one day, you'll believe it too.

The It Stick

Anna Julia Vissioli Rodrigues

My family would move out of Brazil on the following day but on my last day, we played. We played upon the first cock-a-doodle-doo of the morning. We never stopped playing for a second; brushing dollies' hairs, make-believe with stuffed animals, and collapsing Jenga. For the rest of the special day, we played in the playground down the rock street of our neighborhood.

Duda, you remember, we had played this game a million times before in this very playground. We first played it at my fifth birthday party after the cake; it was your idea.

"I got you, ha-ha," I mocked while making bunny ears at you and throwing you the bent it-stick.

I steered away from your swinging hand as I sprinted off to the right, near the orange wall that contained a forest of trees as well as tiny monkeys and bats.

A baby bat had found its way to my garden a month before. We screamed when it flew over my curls, louder than when we watched the Monster House movie behind my mother's back on Halloween night.

You whizzed through the red swings after Lisa, but she dodged you, pointing her sneaker at the right before going to the left. She ran all the way to the gate of the pool without breaking a sweat. You, Duda, fell for it like an amateur, and you lost your balance. You nearly went face-first into the grass, and I snorted until I kneeled over.

You let out a growl worthy of a jaguar before sprinting toward me; you had fire red in your eyes, I remember that.

I was near the playground house, and I climbed the chipping steps, slipping the whole short way. You were a breath away from catching me. I went down the yellow slide the second that.

I reached the top, but you decided to leap after me with your hands extended. We tumbled to the ground, me first-face with a mouth full of grass.
All that mattered was that you caught me: I was it.

"Anna Julia, I'm sorry...your face! You're bleeding! Lisa, come on, Anna Julia is hurt!"

I reached around you, Duda, and pried the it-stick out of your grip. You began to argue, but I said, "We can't stop playing, not now. We have to play."

No one tried to argue any further and we played until the first star appeared and our parents shouted our names by our doorways.

The white moving trucks came early on the following day. You waved goodbye as I pressed my face against the window. Tears raced down our cheeks and made a lake at our chins. Now, I wonder if I will ever see you two again and be able to play like children once more.

Hide-and-Seek

Jenna Plaisted

I jump into the nearest bin I can find and let out a yelp when my ankle twists. The footsteps approaching me stop and turn in my direction as I clamp my hand over my mouth to cover my breathing. I can't believe I let myself come that close to being caught again. I should know better, I've played this game enough times, even won a few rounds. I only need to win one more time. I just need to level up and move from a pursued to the pursuer. I'm tired of being chased, I want my turn, I'm ready for that liberation. It's so close I can taste it, even though I honestly have no idea how many others are left. That's part of the mystery, you don't know how close you are to finishing until it's done. It keeps the energy of the game up when the players don't know how much longer they have or how many opponents are left. Not knowing keeps uson edge and alert, never stopping or becoming distracted even for a second. I've been lazy this round, I've lost my focus and now I'm stuck in a box with the seeker twenty feet away.

"Come out, come out wherever you are, you can't hide from me forever" the voice taunts from above me. The seeker continues moving closer and the footsteps even louder as I cower in the bin. I can't let them find me, I've made it this far and I'm not giving up now. I can hear the person flipping boxes open and checking behind every cupboard door and I can tell they're about to open my bin when a crash sounds from the next room.The seeker takes off running towards the sound and I breathe a sigh of relief.

I wait at least five minutes to get out of the box and find a new hiding spot. It's dangerous to stay in one place for too long and that was way too close of a call. I get my bearings and walk quickly through the adjacent rooms, the soles of my sneakers moving silently across the floor. The frantic stomping of other people

running echoes through the air and I can see the flashlight bouncing across the walls as they're pursued.The number attached to my shirt is crumpled and I wish I knew what time it was, but watches aren't allowed.They say we have to have total immersion into the experience. I've given up on trying to walk through the clock section because everything is in a different time zone. It's a good place to hide for a bit though, the ticking covers up any other noise.

I've walked for so long that everything has become eerily quiet. Nothing moves except for me and my heartbeat is ringing in my ears. I've moved through rooms filled with couches and armchairs, paintings and freaky sculptures, and every last word is written in Swedish. I feel caught on all sides by starch cushions and neon colors, but I'll take the cheap furniture over another person. I continue moving down the hallways when I hear a shoe squeak behind me. My body freezes and my face goes slack, I have to make a decision to either run or hide. My feet start fumbling across the floor, slowly connecting to the signal my brain is attempting to send, and I skid underneath the purple sectional across from me.

But the other shoes don't follow me. I can hear them sprinting towards me but they turn at the last second and I see another person slide under the couch across the walkway. They're playing the game too. The air goes still as heavy footfalls sound from the entrance to the hallway. The other player and I meet eyes, both of us crouched and seemingly waiting for doom. Eitherthey walk right past us or one of us is about to lose. All of my nerves are firing off, telling me to run, but it's too late to leave now so I sit and wait and hope for the best.

The shoes walk right past us. They don't seem to sense us at all, they didn't even hesitate. But I don't dare move, they could easily change their mind and come back. The other player doesn't seem to realize this as he lets out a heaving sigh of relief. A shriek and the sound of a body sliding are the last thing I hear before the lights come on, blinding me after hours in darkness.

"Congratulations player #313, you've won this round." sounds from the ceiling.

The Beginning

Devyn Mae

It had been a long day, but one like any other. The breeze was nice and light , cutting into the heat of the midsummer afternoon. There wasn't much else to do when you were rooted to the ground but to observe. All my years had consisted of observations, whether it be of the birds struggling in the wind or human children climbing my branches. But I had learned knowledge came from this. To observe was to understand life.

Suddenly, I could hear the wailing of a child in the distance, the sight of a little boy running up the hill leading to me. As he got closer,I noticed something strange; his feet were covered, unlike the rest of the creatures I had observed.I wondered how he was able to run sosmoothly with the restraints.

Once he reached my trunk, he threw himself on the ground, crying as if his leaves had changed a season too early. Not understanding what was happening, I attempted to comfort himusing my branches to shade him more from the overlooking sun. He just seemed to cry harder, getting into a state of hysteria that I knew I could not help with.

As he began to convulse slightly less, a young girl began to approach from the bottom of the hill, her hair tied up into two sections on the top of her head. She was reading a book. I found it fascinating as she maneuvered her way up the hill with her eyes cast downward at the book,with only a slight sway of her body as she reached the top. As she did, the crying seemed to finally register in her ears, causing her to lookup from her book to the boy on the ground.

"Why are you crying?" the young girl asked. She started to close the book, making sure to save her spot with her finger, and sat down next to the boy.

"I'm not crying," sniffled the boy as he shifted his body in the direction opposite of her.

"Yes, you are. I can see the tears," she said.

The boy looked up with an angry expression and replied,"Well, it's none of your business."

"Okay, we don't have to talk about it. My name is Amity. What's yours?" she asked. The boy looked up, and the tears had stopped by now, leaving him with a pale complexion and red eyes.

"It's Sabin," he replied curtly. Amity crooked her head to the side, looking at him like a dog when their human attempts to speak to them. I was now wondering where this was going to go as she continued to stare at him.

"Do you want me to read to you, Sabin?" she asked with a subtle smile gesturing to the book in her hand. As the skin around his mouth pulled upward, I knew this was the beginning ofsomething as beautiful as nature itself.

Red Lego

Devyn Mae

The couple sat opposite one another at the long dining table. They silently picked at their food, glancing up at one another when they thought the other wasn't watching. A third place setting satin the middle between the two individuals, empty.

"I don't like chicken." the man said while pushing it across his plate.

"Since when?" replied the woman with a sigh.

"I never have, you know this."

"No, you haven't. You eat chicken all the time."

"No. Danny liked chicken. I did not." the man said with a sigh.

The woman looked up at the man, her eyes shining with unshed tears. "Well, then. I'll just make you something else." the woman said while getting up and walking towards him. As she approached to take his plate, he raised his hands, almost in a defensive stance.

"No, it's fine. I'll eat the chicken," he replied, trying to take hold of the plate. She maneuvered it away from his reach, walking into the kitchen. He sighed and got up, walking after her.

"Sarah, please..." he said, "Ah!"

The woman turned around at the loud noise to see her husband clutching his foot and glaring at a red lego piece on the floor.

"Danny!" the man yelled.

With the exclamation, the man and the woman looked up at one another, taking hold of each other's gaze. The woman's mouth began to quiver.

"Sarah..." the man whispered as the woman fell to the ground sobbing. He walked up toher with tears of his falling down his nose. He silently wrapped his arms around her shaking frame and gently rocked with her on the ground.

Recycled Promises

Emily DeAugustino

The ballroom was bathed in soft heavenly light. A strange haze was upon the guests at that moment. A menagerie of colors and sounds that dripped with the precarious nature of watered paint, blurring to create a murky mess that stained the hands and minds of those in attendance. What a strange thing, to question the reality of a moment as you live in it. The colorful figures seemed to float through the haze as only phantoms would move through the night. Blissfully unaware of the raging storm that seemed to consume the outside world. The merry phantoms simply spun and laughed their way through the golden shadows cast upon the marble walls. Everything was perfect here. Handmade by some benevolent deity that these phantoms drew praises too. Perhaps it was the wine, it was something much different that made that night so magical.

That was but a lifetime ago. I stand in the once lively ballroom but only echoes of the past live here now. As I walk to the center of the room, the only sound is the small clicks of my heels against the tile floor. The castle, once a brilliant symbol of older times, was now being used as a museum and tourist icon. Perhaps if I close my eyes long enough, perhaps if I can just retrace those very fragments that haunt my deepest hours, I would be there again. What a lovely madness it is, to be forever frozen in time while the world outside moves and changes and blurs. It's not a horrible madness, oh the lovely people that have come and go, the excitement of watching the sun rise, the horror of watching empires fall, each day brings something new. I'm used to that now, and I must say that I've adjusted well! Each era comes with it's own language, fashion, own struggles...

There's a faint of music that is playing. It pulls me from my musings as my body freezes in place. A quiet violin echoes throughout the grand room as my feet begin to move on their own accord. Ah, I wonder who is guiding my feet today? Bach? Mozart? Each Friday soft music once again echoes through these halls, but I never question it. It's always a welcome reminder of time long gone. I always assumed it's one of the janitors or maybe the head curator, but it's comforting. In my life, who am I to question the tiny blessings that come my way.

The violins now grow in size as I close my eyes. Tchaikovsky! A dear friend of old! My painted lips turn up into a smile as the soft music slowly guides me throughout the floor. My hands reach out tofind the hands of someone long gone, but only meeting air. My feet seem to spin clockwise of their own accord, my eyes still firmly shut as the ghostly scent of roses and candlelight rekindle old flames that have long been quiet. Time seems to rotate backwards as I feel the present fall away.

1,2,3 Clockwise-

My sweater and pants seem to melt away to a flowing gown. Its pink fabric seeming to shimmerin the light around me, it swirls around my feet as gentle as a summer breeze. Oh my love, do youremember? It was the bold bodice that my mother gave me grief for, the one with with lace? It fit loose around the shoulders of mine, you always set it into place as we danced. My neck is heavy with the diamond necklace you gifted me, glittering and loud. Your love gently woven around my neck and collarbone where your forbidden kisses lay.

1,2,3 Counterclockwise-

The night is still young as we circle each other, our eyes locked in an intense gaze. Your eyes did all the talking during our dance. They held untold secrets and adventures as we moved like angels across the golden floor. Warm in hue, they held the Earth and all of it's nurture in them. They seemed to drip in honey whenever the light hit them just right. Oh the passion they would hold as we spun in circles again and again! A soft giggle escaped my lips as we nearly crashed into Agatha and the Baron...oh his name escapes me. Not that it matters, beady eyed bastard.

You almost always fought him in parliament if I recall...you were always too ahead of our time...

1,2,3 Clockwise-

It's much different now isn't it? The same song but different faces, a different time now. My gown has faded into lilac. The world outside is a different place now my love. My hand still firmly grips yours, and through that mask I can still see your beautiful brown eyes. I'm not surprised am I? You promised you'd always dance with me! We snuck through the twirling masses into the gardens did we not?Oh how we danced the night away before red faced and panting, you asked for my hand. Oh those lovely years did fly by...till you fell asleep.

1,2.3 Clockwise-

Oh how I searched for your eyes for years my love! Was it Russia if I recall? Yes! Oh it was soon before the war, we were so blind to the problems of the world my love. Young and naive we would dance without a care to be had about our fellow man. I'm fooling myself again aren't I? You always cared,trying to use your wealth and status while I firmly tried to ignore the plight of my brothers and sisters. Oh how I would giggle and dance and drink... until War came and you fell asleep once again...

1,2,3 Counterclockwise-

I could not sit idly by anymore after that my love. They hid you away, I went to hide until I saw your eyes again. Your eyes in a starving soul, I could not sit idly by anymore after that my love. They hid you away, I went to hide until I saw your eyes again. Your eyes in a starving soul, a weak body coughing up blood. Was it that time that a bullet took you from me? Or was it famine? How I screamed and cursed at the Tsar...well it was long ago wasn't it? Wherever your rebellious spirit was I tried to track you down.

1,2,3 Clockwise-

I followed your eyes throughout the continent. A little game of hide-and-seek. We danced together in London, after passing out fliers for the vote. I believe it was Bach then? You looked ravishing in that green dress of yours. Your curls expertly piled upon your head. You fell asleep soon after, but imanaged to find you in Paris, I locked eyes with you once. Then I lost you in the crowd

gain. That's when the world changed my love.

No longer could I dance frivolously, for I saw your eyes in every hurting soul I encountered. In trenches, in hospitals, in universities, I did all I could to help my love. But unlike you, my body never changes. I fought, carried correspondence, taught at universities, burned at pires, but I never stopped looking for your intelligent eyes.

2,1,3 was it clockwise or counter clockwise now?

I found you in America again! Stonewall. We didn't dance to classics that time my love. Was it Jazz? Or house music that time? We lived in an apartment in the East side, near the village. I would always attend your shows, screaming your name in excitement and wonder...until they carried you off again my love. I couldn't bear it this time, holding your broken body. Your eyes promised me another dance, at another time. We would finish it my love, we would finish another dance!

3,2,1 Clockwise-

The cities and towns and cities and faces are all blurring now. Your eyes lost in a sea of humanity. Vienna, Stalingrad, London, Paris, New York, Atlanta, Toronto. The violins are rising now,you promised to always find me? Why now? Why must you leave me alone now? You promised me you would dance with me, it's been decades my love! I can't find you Ave ... where are you please? I'm wearing the necklace now! I'm wearing an ochre sweater, your favorite color on me! I've even torn off my mask that we must wear now so that you can see my face. I haven't changed my darling, I'm tired of looking for you. Please...

3,2,3? Clockwise? No- dammit I always forget this part! My ankle twists as I open my eyes and everything falls away. I open my eyes as I go to put my hands out. The loudness of it all becomes a blurred vision. Then it hits me, maybe I'm alone now. Alone. My heart seizes in my chest. Alone. No. You promised me, I can't be alone. I haven't been alone since the days of my youth by the barren summits. My world grows cold as I land on the hard ground. No longer is it painted with gold, but silver. No longer does candle light fill these halls, only the hollow darkness of time swallows it whole. My eyes burn, my chest tightens...I haven't felt

this way in so long. Oh my love, only you could make me feel soalone. I grip my arms tight, trying to get warmth back to me, but it doesn't work. Nothing is going to work! Nothing! Ave I'm begging you please find me! Perhaps...perhaps my world is meant to be cold.A warm hand grabs mine. I look up and my breath stops. Sunlight breaks through the clouds causing you to be outlined in a halo. Your curly hair spills around your perfectly sculpted face that has been handchiseled by the gods above. My heart beats out of time. I wait...do you recognize me? I search your face, your eyes for the answer. Do you remember me? What if you don't remember me? Will you want to dance with me? I'll wait however long you need if that's the case...please remember me!

"1,2,3 clockwise my dear," You say...you...oh my love... I blink as you help me to my feet.

"Ave...You found...you found me!" I stutter, your eyes lit up in pools of honey and gold and the sky rejoices. You pull me into your chest, your heart beat is strong now. Alive. I hold you tightly, terrified you will once again be gone. Slip from my fingers. You chuckle as you let me go, gently taking my hand and bowing. Your kiss sends butterflies through me as I glow a bright pink. You take your phone out and press the button, the music starts again.

"I waited so long for this, I watched you until I could remember my dove. I'm so sorry it's been so long," You murmur against my hair as we slowly start to drift backwards in time. Our clothes melt away as the violins begin their song again, the ballroom slowly becoming bathed in a heavenly light once again. My world is lit aflame by your eyes, I should've known. You always keep your promises.

The Recipe

Connor Lindsay

Carefully, I tip the plastic shaker and let a few grains of salt drop into the teaspoon. I need to get this right; I've failed on this step too many times before. Slowly but surely, the little white pebbles fill the teaspoon up to the top. Perfect.

"One teaspoon of salt," I mutter to myself as I pour it into the large bowl sitting on the counter. It sprinkles down on top of the other contents I've already added: One fourth cup of brown sugar, one pound of ground beef, and one handful of bread crumbs. The term "handful" seems vague compared to the other measurements, but at this point I know what I'm doing. At least, that's true for the ingredients I've dealt with so far. Truth be told, most of the recipe remains a mystery to me. I know I should add Worcestershire sauce, but the amount could be anything between one half teaspoon and two tablespoons. And I think I need to add a dash of... parsley? Oregano? It could just be pepper for all I know. But those first ingredients: beef, bread, brown sugar, and salt. Those I know for sure.

At this point in the process I take out my notebook. I've been working on this for so long that I have several pages full of notes on the ingredients I should -- and shouldn't -- include. Admittedly, I've had a few rather terrible failures in the past; try as I might, a master chef I am not. For instance, I learned quickly that if you add both baking soda and vinegar to a recipe, it creates a rather unpleasant reaction that couldn't have been good for my oven. I also learned that one cup of chili powder is definitely too much chili powder. I've burnt more beef and spilled more sauce than I could ever hope to remember. Yet, even after all those attempts, all those failures, I still feel miles from my goal. The perfect meatloaf eludes me like a white whale in the open ocean. But with enough experimenting, enough trying, enough failing,

I'll find it. Eventually.

Now, instead of one cup of chili powder, I try one tablespoon. The red flakes coat the mixture, giving the whole thing a crimson outer coating. I take a quick note in my book before continuing. Next, the Worcestershire. Last time I added too much and my whole kitchen smelled like the strong sauce for a week. This time, I am more careful. I add exactly one tablespoon, same as the chili powder. Pour, stir, note, next ingredient. The whole process has become automatic, methodical for me. When I first started, I felt like a random number generator, going through every combination until I found the one that works. I think the saying goes that, if you put one hundred monkeys in a room with a typewriter, one of them will eventually write Shakespeare. Or was it one monkey and a hundred typewriters? Or one Shakespeare that will eventually figure out how to use a typewriter and then write about monkeys? Something along those lines.

After several minutes of meticulously measuring and adding other ingredients, I come to the last one. The hardest one. The one that, ninety-nine percent of the time, will be the cause of my failure. Water. It seems simple, right? I mean, the first time I didn't even think to add it. And yet, it seems to be the keystone of this whole recipe. Don't add enough, and the meat burns. Add too much, and you end up creating a sort of beefy stew rather than a meatloaf. I'm pretty sure it contributes to the consistency somehow, making sure everything stays together. But then again, I don't really know; like I said before, I'm no chef. And I sure don't know how to make anything stay together.

I look back over my notes, searching for the section labeled "Water." Across the many trials I've conducted, I've narrowed down the amount that I need to somewhere between 3/4 cup to 1 cup. I decide to shoot straight down the middle, filling up my 1/4 cup fully three times and then halfway once. Once that's added and stirred in, I pour the mixture into a large glass baking pan. Holding it, I stare at the oven. It's time for it to cook. This part of the process is always the most stressful for me: the waiting. I've taken my shot, now I just have to wait and see if it'll pay off. It's similar to the feeling you get after submitting a job application.

It's that feeling of "well, it's out of my hands now, nothing I can do but hope it works out." Despite how many times I've tried, I still get that feeling, every time. Maybe that's good; it means that I haven't lost hope yet.

It's always at this point that I get the urge to look at it. I don't know why, it's not like anything will have changed. It will be exactly where I left it, at the front of the notebook, taped to the inside cover. The only thing looking at it does is remind me of my own failure, my own remorse. There's really no reason to look. For once, I think I will resist the temptation.

Who am I kidding?

I flip the notebook back to the front, and there it is. A small piece of paper, yellowed by time, wrinkled from use. Scrawled across its surface are several sentences, elegant handwriting penned in dark black ink. The original recipe. Or what's left of it at least. Here's what I've got:

Hunnicutt
Meatloaf
Combine ingredients in a large bowl:
One pound ground beef
One teaspoon salt
One-fourth cup brown sugar
One handful of bread crumbs
One Worcestershire
A dash of

See the issue? The majority of the recipe is gone, torn off at some point or stained beyond recognition, leaving me only a few complete steps, or otherwise fragments of steps. I wish I could say what happened to the other part; I wish I could at least say when I lost it. But the truth is I have no idea. I didn't care enough to notice, really. Maybe it got put under some moving boxes, and I went to grab it and it ripped. Or maybe I dropped it on the floor and then I stepped on it.

It doesn't matter. It's gone now, that's what matters. Want to know the saddest part? I don't even remember when she gave it to me. Again, I didn't care enough then, not by a long shot. But I guess that's me: Terrible chef, even worse son. The reason why

Norma Hunnicutt's Famous Meatloaf will never be tasted again. Because I didn't care enough.

The oven beeps. It's ready. Hesitantly I walk over, pulling a mitt onto my right hand. I pull down the handle, and a wave of hot steam wafts out of the opening and into my face, blinding me for a few moments. Raising the suspense. I can almost hear a sports announcer in my head: "This is the moment of truth, ladies and gentlemen. Will he finally succeed, fixing his mistake, or will he once again be faced with agonizing failure? Let's find out." I open my eyes and stare down at the pan.

Once the pan is sitting on the stovetop, I can get a better look. Steam wafts off the top, adding to the almost volcanic aesthetic of the food. The meat is the mountain, the red sauce is lava, and I am the scared tourist hoping I don't get burned. Or something. That metaphor got away from me a little bit.

In addition to getting a better look, I also get a better smell. When it hits my nose, a wave of nostalgia slaps me so hard I nearly jump away from the stove. Memories of me as a kid, sitting at a dinner table with my sister and father as my mother approaches holding a pan full of the elusive meatloaf; each of those images quickly flood back into my head. I am overwhelmed with hope. This is the closest I have ever come. Hands shaking, I reach for a knife and begin carving a square section of the loaf off from the main mass. Carefully, I use the knife to place the slice on a plate, the brown-reddish serving looking almost like a soft brick on it's ceramic background. This is the moment of truth. I cut off the edge with my fork and take a bite.

My first thought is not comforting: this isn't right. Something about the spices, the amount of oregano or chili powder; whatever it is, it doesn't taste like I remember. And yet... it's good. Definitely not the same as it was, not Mom's, but good. I quickly shovel in another bite, checking to see if it's the same as the first. I get the same sensation, not exactly one of nostalgia, but still of joy, excitement. Through my trials, I've made something new, something original, and I like it. While part of me is disappointed that I've failed again, another part of me is strangely proud.I wonder if Mom would be ok with this, with what I've created.

I won't ever be able to make her meatloaf, but maybe I can make my own. And maybe that's enough. I consider this for a moment, then nod to myself and grab the notebook. I open it back up to the front page, where the original recipe is taped. Using my black pen, I write:

Davis-Hunnicutt
Meatloaf
Combine ingredients in a large bowl:
One pound ground beef
One teaspoon salt
One-fourth cup brown sugar
One handful of bread crumbs
One tablespoon of Worcestershire
A dash of oregano
One tablespoon of chili powder
Two teaspoons of vinegar
One teaspoon of pepper
One and a half cups of tomato sauce
? cup of water
Cook for one hour, 45 minutes

Dedicated to Norma Hunnicutt.

Sex and Sexuality: 19th Century Female Writers

Nia Murat

Sexuality, specifically female sexuality, has been hidden and often scorned in Western society. Yet, history often reveals those writers who refused to back down from the challenge, defying the social conventions of their time. Two such writers, Hilda Doolittle (H.D.) and Edna St. Vincent Millay, used poetry as their medium to strike out against the oppressive attitude surrounding sex, as well as strict heteronormative societal expectations. In these selected poems, I'm going to explore the two differing approaches these female authors take to normalize sexuality; where H.D. uses natural imagery in relation to the sensual body to assert her stance, Millay utilizes the frame of the sonnet to twist the traditional restraints binding love and sexuality. Both authors refuse to shy away from the raw reality of sex, imbuing their poetry with a sense of longing and pain that echoes real relationships. Only then are they able to truly express all aspects of sexuality.

Starting with H.D, we see the ways in which she uses imagery to express sexuality with a lover, often of ambiguous sex. In "Fragment 113" – a poem inspired by the line "Neither honey nor bee for me" by the poet Sappho – nature is lovingly described in detail with the natural imagery lending itself to physical passion. The poem opens with this idea, as the speaker says, "not honey, not the sweet / stain on the lips and teeth: / not honey, not the deep / plunge of soft belly / and the clinging of the golden-edged / pollen dusted feet" (H.D., lines 7-12). Though the epigraph introduces the natural motif, H.D. immediately inserts the physical with the 'sweet stain on the lips and teeth.' Specifically, these two parts of the body often imply physical intimacy, which, in connection with the pastoral imagery before it, suggests that the carnal and the natural are one.

This is only furthered by the image of the 'deep plunge of the soft belly,' a bodily image that lends itself even more to hints of intimacy. Using the word 'soft' to describe the stomach also speaks to the ambiguous nature of the lover, as soft is usually an adjective used with feminine features in poetry. The emphasis put on Sappho, an ancient poet widely known for her poetry that dotes on the female form, just solidifies that H.D. is pushing back against the traditional ideas of sex and sexuality, both in expression and gender.

These ideas only continue as "Fragment 113" does, coming to a head in the final stanza. As the natural imagery begins to give way to more abstract ideas, the speaker asserts that:

> not iris – old desire – old passion –
> old forgetfulness – old pain – [...]
> knowing that you shall feel,
> about the frame,
> no trembling of the string
> but heat, more passionate
> of the bone and the white shell
> and fiery tempered steel (lines 31-43)

Here, we see the continuation of the physical, with the mention of the 'bone' and 'trembling,' both typically associated with the human body. But it's the repetition of the abstract word 'passion' that truly relates the stanza back to sexuality. In that sense, the 'heat' refers to the passion of sex and intimacy, the driving force of the poem that the speaker is searching for. But there is also a sense of melancholy in the first few lines of the stanza, as the speaker recalls "old passion – old forgetfulness – old pain" (lines 31-32), expressing a different, more painful side of the freed expression the speaker longs for throughout the poem. In this, we see how "Fragment 113" serves as an expression of sexual freedom, as even the more painful aspects of bodily autonomy seep into the words.

H.D. explores similar topics in "Leda," a poem inspired Zeus's rape of Leda, mother to Helen of Troy. In it, the speaker describes the red swan – Zeus in disguise – using sensual imagery to describe the swan. Though, the subject of the poem is male, the clear sexuality of it seems to be from the outside perspective, potentially

that of Leda. We see this in the first stanza, as the speaker describes the swan in detail, the intricate way H.D. weaves the sexual imagery with the natural imagery of the swan: "a red swan lifts red wings / and darker beak, / and underneath the purple down / of his soft breast / uncurls his coral feet" (lines 3-7). The repetition of the color red, often associated with passion, asserts that this color is significant and an intense sensual detail. As it continues with the careful description, almost similar to that of a lover, the speaker describes his 'soft breast.' This image is one repeated in "Fragment 113," signaling to the audience that this is a sexual image, something intimate, though the imagery itself might not be of a human in an intimate moment. By weaving together the imagery of nature and human sexuality, not just that between a man and a woman, H.D. imbues a sense of freedom in her poetry that strikes out against the restrictive attitude surrounding sex in her time.

In contrast, Edna St. Vincent Millay approaches sexuality in a very different, yet still provocative manner. Instead of focusing on imagery, Millay chooses the format of the sonnet, traditionally a masculine form used to serenade their lady lovers, to turn traditional ideas on their head. This can be seen clearly in her poem "I Too beneath Your Moon, Almighty Sex," which evokes a sense of sexuality from the title. The opening lines of the sonnet introduces us to this idea immediately: "I too beneath your moon, almighty Sex, / Go forth at nightfall crying like a cat, / leaving the lofty tower I laboured at / for birds to foul and boys and girls to vex" (Millay, lines 1-4). The first line mirrors the title, assuring the audience that this line is essential to understanding the poem; the word 'Sex' is even capitalized to emphasize it's position as the subject of the sentence. The following line, "Go forth at nightfall crying like a cat" assures us that the sex the speaker refers to is not that of the female sex, at least not inherently. The imagery of the cat crying at night is reminiscent of cats yelling out while in heat, a sign that they're ready to mate. In using this image, Millay ties in sexuality as raw, almost primally so; in a way, she implies a certain connection to the natural that H.D. applied in her poetry. Further, the mention of "boys and girls to vex" (line 4), implies an

an ambiguity in the gender of who the speaker might be crying at in the night, echoing some of the and rogynous language H.D. uses in "Fragment 113." Unlike the common sonnet, the lover here that the speaker serenades is fluid, illuminated only by the moon.

"I Too beneath You Moon, Almighty Sex" continues weaving in abstract concepts and sharp physical details that make up a dreamy nightscape. But, as is the tradition of the sonnet, the last few lines of the poem twist, returning sharply to the sexual foundation of the piece. Though this is a Petrarchan sonnet, where the twist come in in the ending octet, the shift I'm referring to begins in line 12: "From what I had to build with: honest bone / Is there, and anguish; pride; and burning thought; / And lust is there, and nights not spent alone" (line 12-14). Here, the speaker explicitly refers to lust, the phrase "and nights not spent alone" cementing that the constant throughout this poem is physical intimacy. Millay does not shy away from bluntly stating the point, refusing to hide the pure physicality of her subject. What's more is that she doesn't shy away from the negative realities of sex: these emotions are expressed in the line "anguish; pride; and burning thought" (line 13). Millay expresses both sides of the 'Almighty Sex' – the pleasure that accompanies lust, as well as the pain of physical connections that lack emotional foundation.

Both of these writers, impressive in their own right, fearlessly tackle sexuality in a way that not only expresses female sexual freedom but demands it. While H.D. uses imagery to infuse sexuality with the natural, Millay chooses to twist a traditional form to her own ends. Both women use their platforms to express the lives they live – as both have reportedly expressed sexual and emotionally love freely, and with both genders – as well as the liberty they want for others to express their sexuality. In a society ruled by oppressing the sexuality of women, it's vital even now that writers such as these outspoken poets are recognized for their refusal to stifle their voices and speak their truth.

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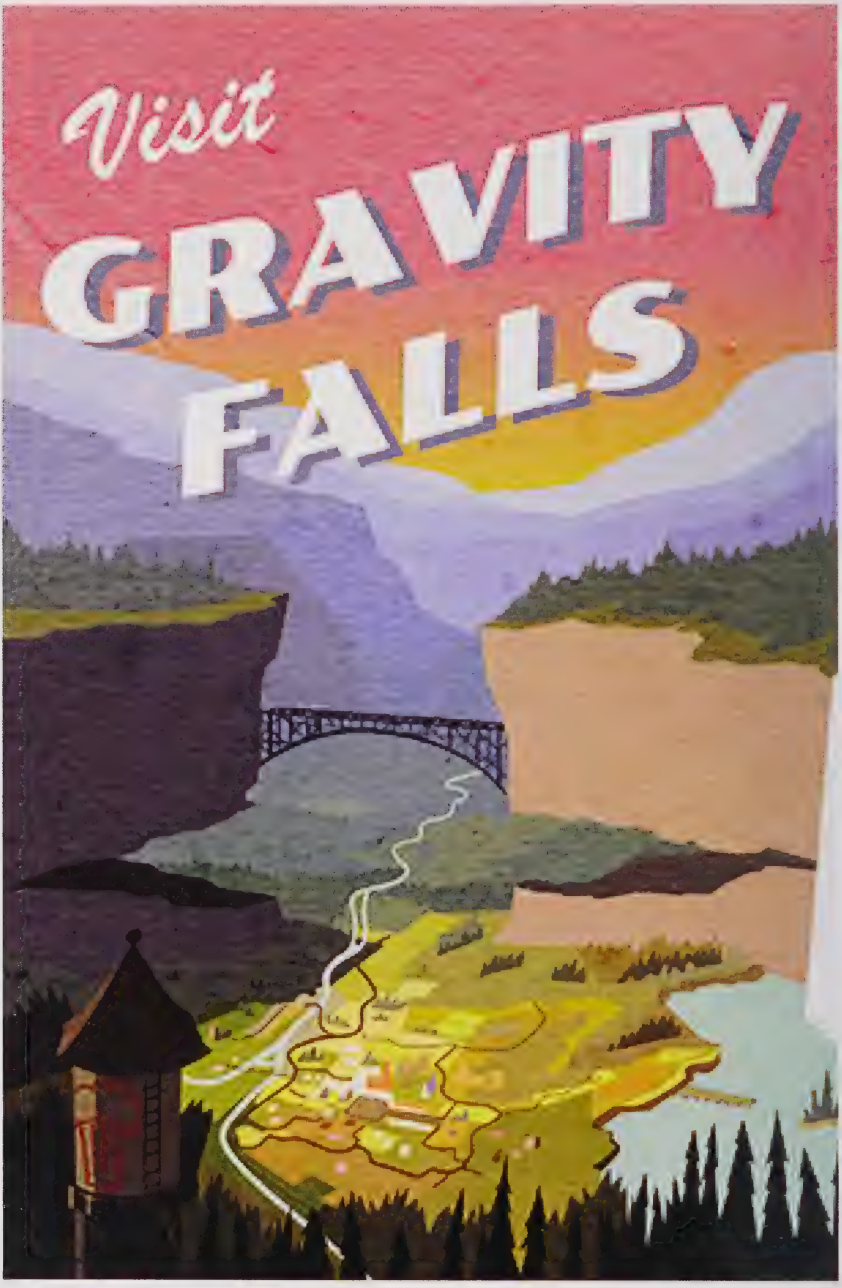

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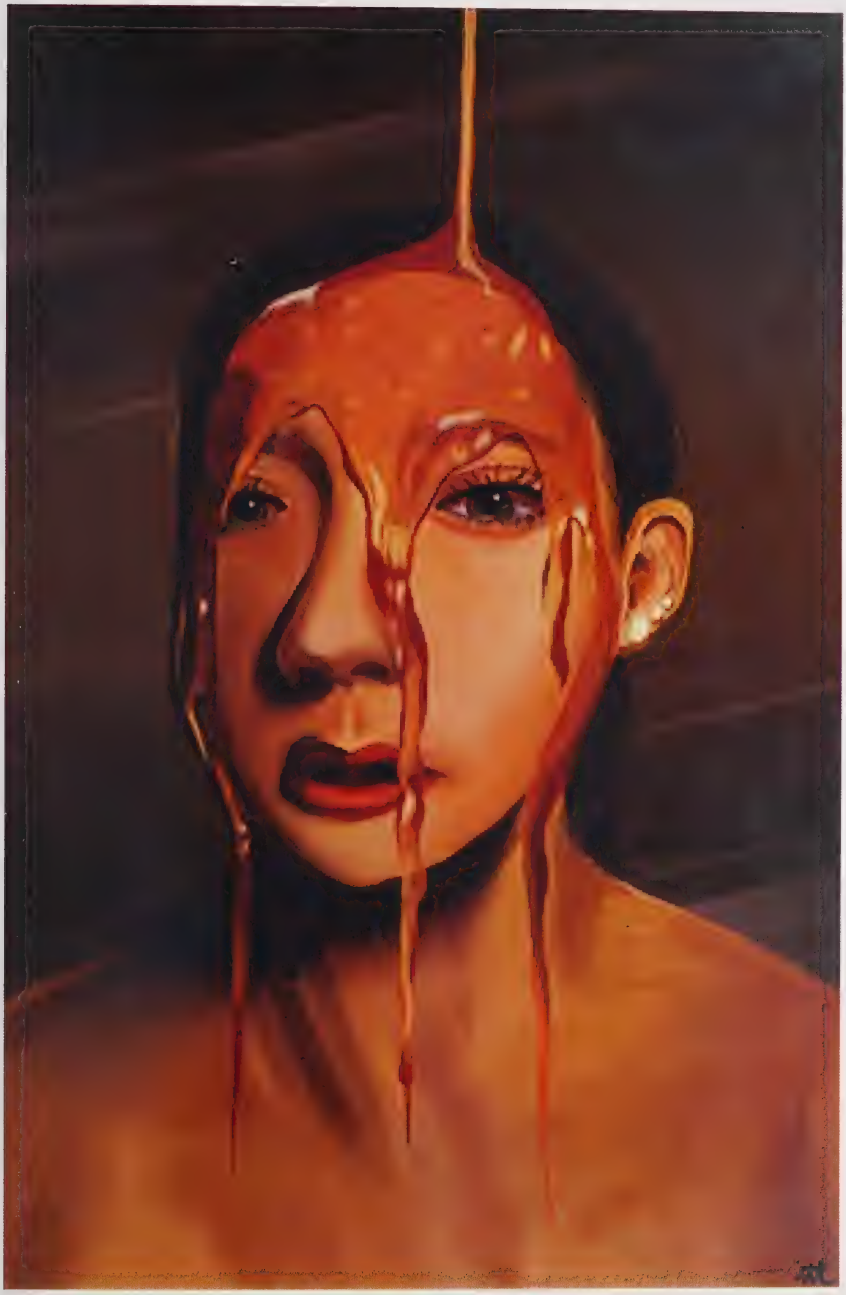

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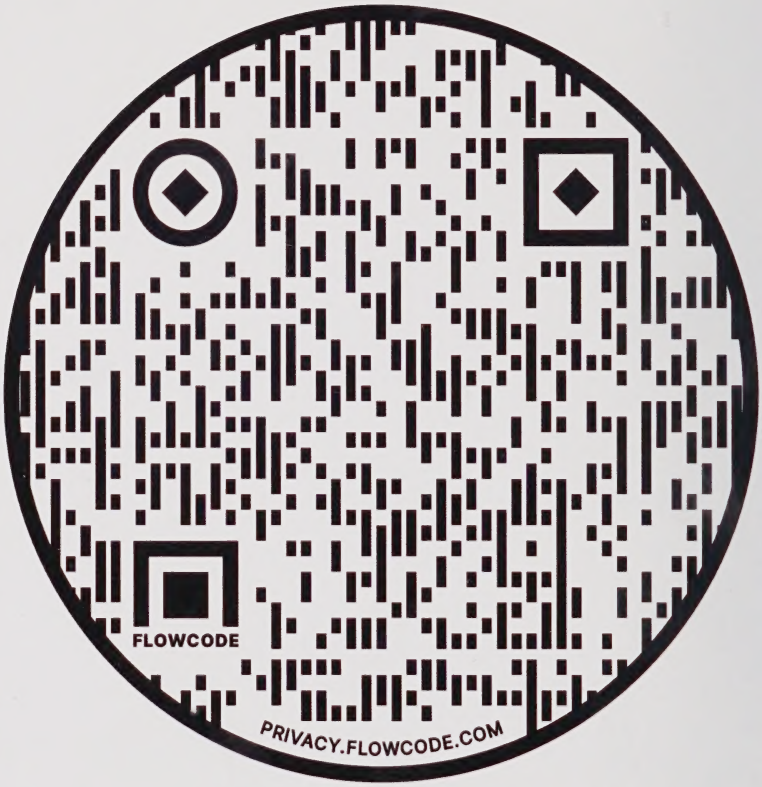

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